

ICE SKATING NEW YORK'S NEWEST FAD



HARRY H. SMITH AND MISS J. ANDERSON AT ST. NICHOLAS RINK.

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CHARLOTTE.

At the Hippodrome.

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MISS BETTY LA FELL SKATING AT ST. NICHOLAS RINK.

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Fashion Has Set the Seal of Approval on the Difficult Art and the Fox Trotters Are Taking to the Rinks

SKATING promises to be New York's latest fad, even to the point of being a rival to dancing, this winter. Its growing popularity was first foreshadowed at the theatres. Now the public generally is showing increased interest in the pastime as greater facilities for enjoying it are planned or provided.

Early as it is in the season there has been a marked revival in the art of skating. Possibly Charles B. Dillingham when he imported Charlotte and the rest of her wonderful troupe from the Admiralpalast in Berlin did more than anybody else to make a sensation of the new sport. For Charlotte and her associates have done much to keep the Hippodrome so crowded as it is. But there are others. On the roof of the Forty-fourth Street Theatre the Shuberts have added to the already complete "Castles in the Air" a skating troupe which goes through beautiful evolutions. But the audience is not respectfully requested to join in as it is at some of the other resorts on ice.

The Biltmore is to have its ice rink this year, and will invite members to join its club, which Mrs. William Chanler is conducting largely for the benefit of the Lafayette Fund. Then the St. Nicholas Rink is open with the opportunity for skaters to enjoy themselves. In order that visitors might learn to do the fox trot on ice Clifton Webb and Eileen Molyneux were especially taken to the St. Nicholas Rink to teach the skaters there how they could combine the old diversion and the young. The Waldorf has also arranged to establish a skating rink.

It is true that there is this year less interest in dancing than there was. This is plain since the number of dancing classes is smaller and those such as young women in society had organized for the different hotels have not the same number of members they had a year ago. But it is scarcely to be thought that skating will take the place of dancing.

It was to learn something of the present styles that a Sun reporter talked with Clara Cassel, once a tennis champion and now a skater.

Miss Cassel said at the St. Nicholas Rink: "There are several styles of fancy skating—

the English, the American and the Continental, and the modern school of ballet dancing on the ice. The latter style of skating is exactly the same as the ballet dancing on the floor, and the training for it is similar to the work of the ballet dancer. It consists of tricks, and everything is done for effect. Pantomime is introduced, and the arms and legs are employed regardless of the rules and ideas of strict sport.

"A very fine example of the European ballet on ice is to be seen at the Hippodrome. Charlotte is probably the best of her kind. But how many amateurs would care to skate in this manner?"

"It needs training from early childhood, and is only useful for professional exhibitions. It is the same as ballet dancing and modern dancing—the difference, for instance, between a toe dancer and Mrs. Vernon Castle.

"To the sportsman or woman, form must naturally mean more than tricks and acrobatics. It is far better to execute the simplest edge in the correct international manner than to perform a so-called 'stunt,' which to the experienced skater really means nothing.

"The best teachers and first class professionals in Europe (which is the home of the new school) skate in strict form and do not advocate any other than the simple Continental school. That does not mean that spins, pirouettes, jumps and fancy figures are barred; on the contrary, but they must be executed in first class form.

"Many people do not know the difference in the schools of skating, and I have not the time to explain it, but before continuing I would like to say that the American style consists of grapevines, twists, and their figures are mostly executed in a tiny space on two feet. These figures are entirely out of date and as old fashioned as the barn dance. The best American skaters have adopted the Continental method, and Irving Brokaw has done a great deal to help the sport and the international style.

"The latter method excludes all violent, ugly, angular or stiff action and gives the skater a chance to express his or her personality while



MISS EILEEN MOLYNEUX AND CLIFTON WEBB DANCING
THE HESITATION AT ST. NICHOLAS RINK.

skating almost any figure. It is not trick skating one sees on the American vaudeville stage or done on two feet like the roller skating style; it is pure art and very difficult to master if not properly taught at the beginning. The correct form, as in tennis and golf, means every-

While All the Ambitious Ones Cannot Be "Charlottes" Expert Avers There Is Hope for the Amateur

thing; therefore I advise the best teacher as soon as straight skating is mastered. A good authority on skating will be glad to recommend the best, and the teacher's advice should be followed blindly no matter how discouraging the beginning may be. To imitate a good skater is a very practical way to learn.

"I cannot think of a better model than Paul Wilson, who is the Swedish amateur champion and now a visitor in this country. He has won several European championships and his form in fancy skating is absolutely perfect. He often trains at St. Nicholas Rink, and no one should miss the opportunity of watching such a fine example of the international style.

"A matter of the first importance is the equipment, and I am quite sure that three-quarters of the complaints about weak ankles, sore heels and pains in the shins, &c., really come from bad skates and wrong shoes. The finest is none too good, and an expensive outfit is cheapest in the end.

"The novice should remember that hockey boots with low flat heels and short tops, straps or ankle supports of tough leather should be taboo. So should the long flat hockey skates or rockers. The latest Continental model is the only one to skate correctly on; all others are useless. The question of dress should also be carefully considered—loose, light garments are advisable. Heavy clothes incapacitate the skater and are a handicap. In these days of full skirts the question of selecting a suitable costume should be simple. Black velvet is very pretty, lined with a bright silk.

"Everybody wants to learn the waltz, and I hear many ladies say they would give ten years of their life to be able to skate correctly. Well, that is not at all necessary; if they would give one hour's concentration and work a day for two seasons such a sacrifice would not be called for.

"They wonder how it's done, and really it is one of the most simple and still one of the most beautiful movements in the whole skating art. The poetry of motion, only it must be correctly taught from the beginning, and the position of the body and the edges must be mastered alone.

"The waltz step can be learned after the forward edge, the three and backward edge practised indefinitely, and these must be skated perfectly, alone, and the rest is child's play. The music helps to keep the rhythm, and, as in dancing, the head, shoulders, ankles and unemployed foot should all work in unison.

"The ten step, another form of waltz, is even easier and looks very effective, and after a pair of Continental skaters have worked together the figures are endless, and always interesting to watch, if well executed; but it is wrong to ever depend on any one else for support. The secret of the waltz and all double dances is the strength of each individual skater's edges, and the four edges are the foundation of all figure skating and should be practised daily and indefinitely.

There are those who attribute the revival in skating to the beauty of the new skating costumes. Mrs. Brown, they argue, does not buy a leather suit or heavy striped skirt of upholstery velvet because she wishes to skate; she skates because she could not resist the suit, to say nothing of the high pointed boots or gay worsted cap and muffler.

Skating for New York, according to this view of the matter, has been predestined since last August, when Russian suits began to arrive—velvets, velours, glazed kid, bright with Oriental embroidery and banded with fur. For two seasons London and Paris had lost their heads to their feet, and for many seasons the German Crown Prince and Princess had fired the ice palace on Moltkestrasse one day in the week for their exclusive use, while on the other six thousands of rosy Berliners skated and drank their beer and stayed themselves with "butterbrods." And now the fashion has travelled across the ocean.

True, the New York climate and topography are not favorable to skating. The fickleness of the weather, the coyness of ponds are not conducive to a universal devotion to this sport. But New York is never deterred by obstacles. When delightful skating costumes come all the way from Europe the least New York can do is to provide skates and skaters—and these necessitate skating places.